INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: INTEGRATING PAST INTO PRESENT

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The Indian education system is one of the largest and oldest in the world. Its origins can be traced back to the ancient **Gurukul** tradition and world-renowned centres of learning such as **Nalanda University** and **Taxila (Takshashila)**. These institutions attracted scholars not only from India but also from China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, Persia, Greece, and various regions of Central Asia, making ancient India a global intellectual destination. Nalanda and Taxila were not merely universities; they were highly organized learning ecosystems where students engaged in rigorous study of philosophy, economics, statecraft, astronomy, medicine, grammar, mathematics, military science, and spiritual knowledge under structured pedagogical systems.

Ancient Indian education was profoundly influenced by the **Vedas** and **Upanishads**, which viewed learning as a transformative journey aimed at self-realization and moral elevation. Education was multidimensional designed to refine intellect, character, spirituality, leadership qualities, and self-reliance. This holistic approach produced scholars who were philosophers, scientists, administrators, teachers, and thinkers, contributing significantly to global intellectual traditions.[1]

In the contemporary era, India has emerged as the **third-largest** education system in the world, after the United States and China. The country's higher education framework includes globally respected institutions such as the IITs, IIMs, NITs, IISERs, AIIMS, and numerous central and state universities. These

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[1] Saraf, Somnath. Education in Human Values: Program Implementation.
     Available At: https://stsoldierjournaloflawandsocialscience.com

institutions are known for their organizational efficiency, academic rigor, and contribution to research, innovation, technology, healthcare, economics, and governance. They play a central role in shaping India's knowledge economy and producing competitive global professionals.

However, alongside progress, the system faces deep-rooted structural issues that hinder optimal academic outcomes. A growing number of institutions offer educational programmes not out of a commitment to quality, but merely as a status symbol within the higher education marketplace. Many colleges operate with only one PhD-qualified faculty member, appointed largely for regulatory compliance rather than genuine academic enhancement. As a result, the quality of teaching has declined, with many educators lacking strong subject knowledge, pedagogical training, or the inner motivation required to guide students effectively.

A pressing concern is the shortage of teachers who possess adequate practical expertise, particularly in laboratory-based disciplines, clinical sciences, and applied fields. This leads to highly theoretical teaching methods that fail to foster innovation or hands-on understanding. Teachers, due to systemic fatigue, administrative overload, and limited professional development opportunities, often refrain from encouraging students to pursue higher academic standards.

At the same time, the broader quality of education has suffered significantly. Education plays a decisive role in the development of nations, yet in India, the focus has often shifted from quality to merely quantity. Although the number of institutions and graduates has increased, academic standards have steadily declined. Real improvement is urgently needed. The introduction of the **National Education Policy (NEP)** aims to address many of these structural gaps and may bring meaningful changes. However, such reforms will remain incomplete unless the country begins to give genuine importance, weightage, and priority to the education sector and its institutions. Without systemic respect for education and educators, no policy however well designed can transform the system.

Simultaneously, a new culture of **"Google students and Google teachers"** has emerged. Students increasingly depend on instant online answers instead of reading books, analysing concepts, or engaging with primary sources. Teachers too sometimes rely excessively on digital shortcuts. The declining use of libraries, journals, research papers, and scholarly databases has weakened deep reading habits, originality, and critical thinking. Students frequently attend college only to ensure eligibility for examinations, showing minimal classroom engagement. This exam-oriented culture undermines both learning and intellectual maturity.

Another major challenge is the outdated and rigid curriculum found in many universities. Academic programmes often fail to reflect emerging industry trends, global developments, technological changes, and research advancements. Many students believe that their degree "will not help them secure employment or entry into reputed institutions,"[2] leading to diminished motivation and poor academic discipline.

To revitalize the Indian education system, reforms must be holistic, future-oriented, and value-driven. Curricula should be regularly updated to incorporate skill-based learning, interdisciplinary approaches, economic literacy, digital competency, research methodology, mental health awareness, and vocational training. Teacher training must be strengthened, research funding expanded, and institutional accountability improved. Reading culture must be revived by integrating library-based assignments, research projects, and compulsory engagement with academic sources.

Most importantly, the timeless wisdom of the **Vedas** and **Upanishads** should be meaningfully integrated into modern education. Their teachings on truth, compassion, discipline, humility, self-control, respect for nature, and spiritual awareness can shape morally grounded, emotionally resilient, and socially

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[2] Mishra, P. N. "Ancient Indian Wisdom for Modern Management." University News.

responsible individuals. This ethical foundation is vital for a nation seeking sustainable development and global relevance.

India stands at a crucial crossroads. By combining the intellectual richness of its ancient heritage with modern scientific, economic, and technological advancements, the nation can build an education system that is globally competitive, deeply rooted in values, and capable of producing enlightened, innovative, and compassionate citizens who contribute meaningfully to national progress and the betterment of humanity.[3]

End Note

No educational policy, however ambitious, can truly transform the Indian education system unless there exists a genuine quest for teaching among teachers and an equally strong quest for learning among students. For such a transformation, it is essential that both stakeholders are intellectually, morally, and educationally strong. Moral and value-based education must therefore become an integral component of the curriculum, as it nurtures discipline, creativity, sincerity, and ethical conduct—qualities indispensable for building a responsible academic community

Equally important is the availability of well-qualified teachers, adequate academic resources, and an environment that encourages continuous intellectual growth. While saying **Yes** to technology, expanding government initiatives, and strengthening global competitiveness and employability are necessary, they must be complemented by a deep commitment to educational ethics and personal integrity. Only through such a balanced and holistic approach can the Indian education system realise its full potential and contribute meaningfully to national development.

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[3] Association of Indian Universities.
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